

Tablet Splitting: Evaluating Appropriateness for Patients

Tool for pharmacists from the 2003–2004 APhA Strategic Directions Committee

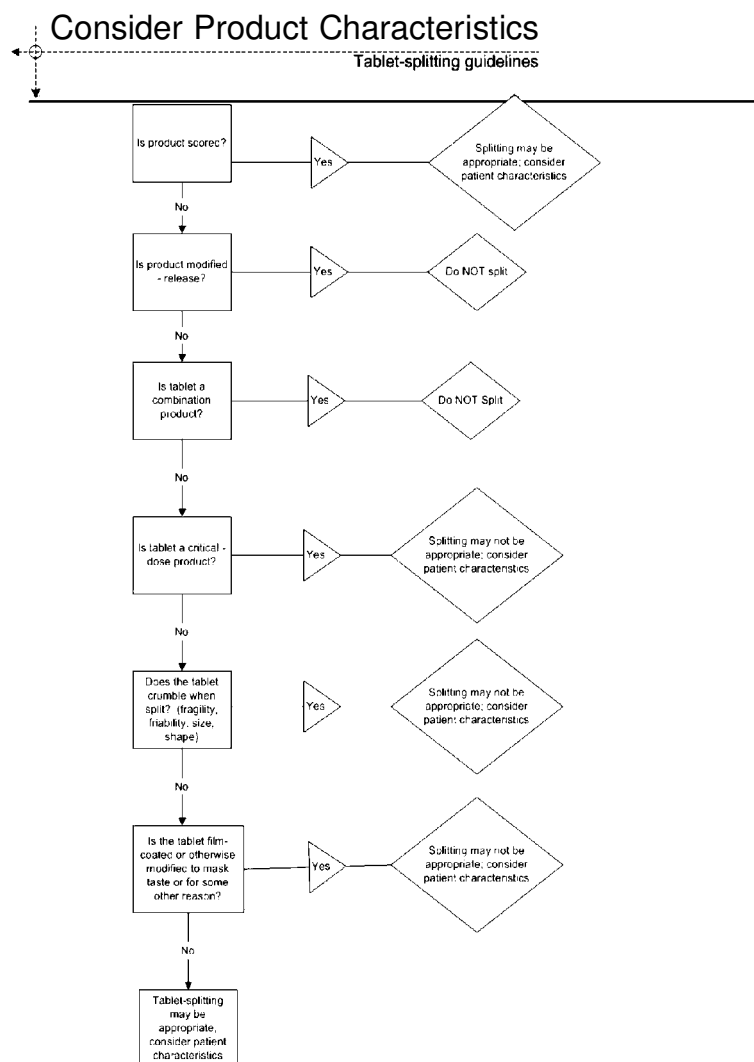
The idea of splitting tablets has centered on patients using a device to halve their drug costs. Health insurers are increasingly urging patients to buy higher-strength tablets and take half at a time. In fact, some are offering free tablet splitters to anyone who agrees to do this voluntarily. But for some patients tablet splitting is not easy or voluntary. Cutting dosage forms into even doses can be tricky, particularly for those who are elderly. Further, promoting half tablets could tempt some patients to split other drugs that should always be taken whole.

The American Medical Association and APhA formally oppose mandatory tablet splitting. Done correctly, splitting prescription tablets can save money. Done incorrectly, the practice can endanger patient health.

The Strategic Directions Committee (SDC) reviewed the available literature and input from practitioners regarding the impact of the splitting of tablets on patient care. The SDC developed questions for pharmacists and decision makers to consider when evaluating the appropriateness of tablet splitting for individual patients and products. The guidelines appear in Figures 1 and 2.

The Committee also recommends that the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Pharmacopeia study the splitting of tablets to provide data on the

Figure 1. APhA Resource: Practice. Tool for Pharmacist Evaluation of Appropriateness of Tablet Splitting: Product Considerations



appropriateness of tablet splitting from a scientific basis.

APhA welcomes feedback on these policies. Comments or suggestions should be forwarded to APhA Staff Counsel and Vice President for Policy and Communications Susan C. Winckler, JD, at swinckler@aphanet.org.

Editor's note: The 2003–2004 Strategic Directions Committee of the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) discussed a number of patient

safety issues facing pharmacists, including the increasing prevalence of tablet splitting. This is an excerpt of its report to the APhA Board of Trustees.

Members of APhA's 2003–2004 Strategic Directions Committee were Daniel A. Herbert, Chair; Loyd Allen, Bruce R. Canaday, Melinda C. Joyce, Bill Letendre, Karen L. Reed, Rod D. Shafer, Theodore G. Tong, and Andrew P. Traynor; Mitchel C. Rothholz and Susan C. Winckler, staff liaisons.

Figure 2. APhA Resource: Practice. Tool for Pharmacist Evaluation of Appropriateness of Tablet Splitting: Patient Considerations

